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S E C R E T BEIJING 003117

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/13/2029

TAGS: PREL MASS MARR PARM CH IS

SUBJECT: ISRAELI AMBASSADOR ON PRC-ISRAEL MILITARY TIES

Classified By: DCM Robert Goldberg. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) During a November 12 meeting with Congressman Robert Wexler (D-FL), Israeli Ambassador to China Amos Nadai briefed on Israeli-Chinese bilateral military relations and appealed for relaxing USG oversight of Israeli military exports to the PRC. Military relations had been important in Israel-China ties, Nadai explained. In the 1980s, bilateral relations had developed after China had appealed to Israel for military assistance after the PLA's poor performance in skirmishes with Vietnam. (Note: Nadai may have been referring to the 1979 PRC attack on Vietnam). The generation of Chinese leaders who remembered this interaction was beginning to pass, however, so Israel was hoping to engage on military-to-military issues with younger Chinese leaders. The Chinese had told Israel directly that improving military-to-military ties would allow for an improvement in relations across the board.

¶2. (S) While overall bilateral relations had generally been good, Ambassador Nadai said, they had been marked by two "traumas;" the cancellation of AWACS aircraft sales in 2000, and the cancellation of Harpy unmanned aircraft sales and servicing in 2005. Nadai put much of the blame for these episodes on Israeli officials, who "did everything wrong." The restrictions that Israel had put in place after the 2005 incident had been "deeper than you asked for," and Israel's compliance with the restrictions received "good marks" from the U.S. Defense Department, Nadai asserted.

¶3. (S) Ambassador Nadai stated that in his personal assessment, after five years of compliance it was appropriate for Israel to ask for a review of the restrictions. He noted a feeling among some in Israel that U.S. restrictions, while partly based on national security concerns, were also partly "commercial," claiming that in bilateral military interactions with China "you are doing things that we are not." Nadai emphasized that these were his personal views and any formal request for a review would be conveyed officially from Tel Aviv to Washington. He suggested that Defense Minister Ehud Barak could bring the issue up with Secretary Gates. Nadai noted that the arms restrictions were not a major bilateral issue between the U.S. and Israel, but nonetheless important to Israel.

¶4. (U) Congressman Wexler cleared this cable.

HUNTSMAN